

Richardson Center Corporation Public Meeting

April 16, 2008

Recorded by: Monica Pellegrino Faix, Project Coordinator, Richardson Center Corporation

| Topic | Discussion |
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| Welcome and Introductions | Howard Zemsky welcomed the public to the third public meeting of the Richardson Center Corporation, to provide updates on rehabilitation plans for the Richardson Olmsted Complex (the former Buffalo State Asylum for the Insane). The agenda will include an update on stabilization efforts, the Historic Structures Report, Cultural Landscape Report, Master Plan, Buffalo Richardson Architecture Center (Architecture and Visitor Center), and Question and Answer. |
| Buffalo Richardson Architecture Center | The Buffalo Richardson Architecture Center will be an Architecture and Visitor Center in the twin towers administration building. It will serve as a center for local, national and international visitors. It will be an inspiring presentation highlighting the region's assets, including our cultural, landscape and architectural legacy, and allow public access to the most iconic building. The board is interviewing three firms and will select a firm, in the next few months to help the board with the vision and concept. |
| Site map overview | On the site map, the tan area is surplus; it is the area that the Office of Mental Health (OMH) no longer needs for their operations and is the portion that the RCC is legally responsible for; the green area is maintained by OMH for the Buffalo Psychiatric Center operations. The board believes their mandate and responsibility is to examine the entire site and master plan the site as a whole. This is proceeding with the understanding that the existing Buffalo Psychiatric Center operations will remain on the site. |
| Stabilization | <p>Monica Pellegrino Faix provided an update about stabilization efforts. The RCC obtained \$2.1 million from the state allocation of \$76.5 million. Empire State Development was instrumental in helping to secure the funds and DASNY is the project manager. With the help of Foit Albert Associates and Goody Clancy, a scope of work was prepared to prevent further deterioration and vandalism.</p> <p>The roofs of three buildings were repaired: Building 45 twin towers building - completed in October 2007; Building 10 ward – completed in November 2007; Building 39, the second ward building east of Rees Street – completed in March 2008- sheet metal was installed to cover holes in roof and copula and gutters were installed. Work has begun to stabilize Building 43, the former women's kitchen behind the twin towers administration building. Fencing around Building 43 was installed last Fall for safety. A plan to reenergize electrical power to light the building perimeter and install a smoke and heat detection system is underway. IBC Engineering completed an electrical survey and will prepare the design. A plan is being worked out with the Office of Mental Health to temporary reconnect to the Buffalo Psychiatric Center electric. Superstructures Engineers & Architects evaluated all the connector links and prepared a design to stabilize the collapsing connecting corridor between Buildings 39 and 40. The plans are being reviewed for a building permit, enabling work to begin in May and be completed in 2 months.</p> |

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| | <p>To address safety and security, increased security patrols occurred at Halloween to supplement the Buffalo Psychiatric Center security, building entry points were assessed, and brush and trees were moved away from the building (and will be removed from site).</p> <p>An additional \$300,000 remains in the stabilization budget due to cost savings and changes in the original scope of services; this will be used toward additional stabilization measures.</p> <p>Unexpected issues, such a towers window covering that needed replacement were brought to our attention by community members. Community members should feel free to contact the Richardson Center Corporation if they see something amiss on the site.</p> |
| <p>Master Plan</p> | <p>David Gamble of Chan Krieger Sieniewicz introduced the master planning team, which includes team members with national and local expertise, to address a constellation of issues: economic, historic, architectural, landscape, public outreach and permitting. The team consists of Chan Krieger Sieniewicz as the lead master planners and includes Bero Architecture for historic preservation, Reed Hilderbrand for landscape, Clarion Associates for economic development with a background on revitalization of historic properties, Bob Shibley of the Urban Design Project for the public process, City Properties, real estate development group from Louisville, KY for economic development with a focus on adaptive reuse, Baer Associates for cost estimating, and Parsons Brinckerhoff for EIS and permitting. The master plan is a combination of all these elements with a focus on implementation, it is a 12 month effort and the team is just getting started.</p> <p>The master plan will process will proceed with the development of a series of alternative plans which will test immediate incremental and judicious change as well as long term transformative bold changes. These will be developed and discussed and result in the selection of the preferred plan.</p> <p>The team is excited about the inspiration of Kirkbride, Richardson and Olmsted and the opportunities for reuse of the buildings and grounds. Challenges exist as well, such as parking and the creation of an economic revitalization plan alongside an existing psychiatric center. Chan Krieger Sieniewicz specializes in urban design and architecture, and will take into consideration both when addressing the multiple scales of the building - from the architectural details to the relationship of the building to the existing networks around the site. The master plan will utilize the existing framework created by the City of Buffalo Comprehensive Plan, Urban Land Institute Advisory Panel and the Historic Structures and Cultural Landscape Report.</p> <p>Bob Shibley spoke about the public process, which will maximize the potential for public interaction. A Master Plan Advisory Group will be formed with representatives from community entities, for example the group might contain stakeholders from interests in historic preservation, community/neighborhood, transportation, government, economic development, government and the mental health community. There will be monthly advisory group meetings for 12 months and 3 public meetings: one at the beginning to help formulate strategic considerations, key values and guiding</p> |

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| | principles that should drive the work from the public perspective, a second mid way meeting at about 50% completion, 3-5 months, to present preliminary plans for input, and a third at about 85% to review the near final plans. There will be other public components such as a web based portal and a 3D model visualization tool. | |
| Historic Structures Report | Jean Carroon from Goody Clancy presented an update on the Historic Structures Report (HSR). The HSR is a tool to address historic and existing conditions for future planning and rehabilitation efforts. The half way report was prepared and the final report will be complete in June. The report will have five volumes: Executive Summary, Developmental History, Existing Conditions Assessment, Treatment and Recommendations and Appendices. The Developmental History includes the history of Richardson, Kirkbride, Olmsted and how the site fits in to Buffalo's architectural history and the history of mental health treatment. There is an important history about the architects, buildings, design and attitudes towards mental health treatment. The Developmental History phases are: Construction (1870-1899), WWII and Expansion (1900-1945), Post WWII and Deinstitutionalization (1946-1974) and Partial Vacancy and Preservation (1975–2006). The site includes National Historic Landmark (NHL) buildings, National Register (NR) and National Register eligible buildings, contributing and non contributing buildings. The NHL/NR nomination focused on the buildings and not the grounds; the HSR will recommend expanding the nomination to include the grounds and the significant patterns in mental health treatment that the site represents. A second component of the report is the evaluation of Existing Conditions. To assess Existing Conditions, probes were taken of brick, wood and mortar for analysis and a room by room survey conducted. Ratings, poor to good, of the floors, walls, and ceilings of every floor will be in the final report. The buildings are remarkably sound; even in areas of localized damage, adjacent areas are sound. The Treatment and Recommendation section will recommend rehabilitation as the appropriate historic treatment (from the range of Secretary of Interior standards options - preservation, restoration, reconstruction and rehabilitation). The recommendations will identify guidelines for issues such as accessibility, health and safety, environment and energy and specific recommendations such as not using acid cleaner and matching to the original mortar colors. | |
| Cultural Landscape Report | Carrie Mardof of Heritage Landscapes spoke about the Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), the CLR is a tool for future landscape rehabilitation guidelines. The CLR places the Richardson Olmsted Complex in the context of its therapeutic landscape throughout the century. Character defining features such as spatial, organization, topography, vegetation, water features will be identified. All vegetation and built elements, such as drives and curbs, were inventoried by the team. This will help to compare the existing and original elements. Carrie gave a brief evolution of landscape from 1880's to 1960's: Olmsted's original parkstyle design included curving paths, sloping lawns, and groups of trees, the landscape remained relatively intact until the 1960's/1970's. Today there is a remnant landscape with some elements of the original topography and paths, drives, and a few historic plantings. | |
| | Question / Comment | Answer / Response |
| Question and Answer | Joan Baizer stated that the Museum of Disabilities run by People Inc. is considering expansion and is interested in moving into the Richardson Olmsted Complex. She requested that the RCC consider the idea of a museum that addresses mental health and disabilities on the site. | This is an idea that the RCC will keep in mind. |
| | How will outreach to the block clubs be included in outreach and | An Advisory Group will be formed, if you |

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| | participation? | are interested contact Monica Pellegrino Faix. The master planning process will ensure that there is public involvement. |
| | Justin Azzarella of the Elmwood Village Association said that they oppose the ULI sketches that propose development on Elmwood. They would prefer the site be restored as a cultural landscape. | The ULI report, generated from a one week examination, was a first brush approach to generate ideas for the site, the board recognized that a master plan is needed for more extensive planning. |
| | Kevin Raab asked about the process of revenue reporting. Is the RCC a public benefit corporation? Were Form 990's filed? | The RCC is a 501(c)(3) not for profit. The 2006 Form 990 was not required because the RCC had no revenue or expenses during 2006. The 2007 Form 990 is being prepared. |
| | Franklin Lavoie suggested the inclusion of a program for cutting edge health care and community gardens (with an emphasis on therapeutic health care practices), a labyrinth on the site and continued access for people with psychiatric needs. | These ideas will be kept in mind. |
| | Ruth Lampe asked how Scajaquada Expressway enhancements affect the RCC work and if Bob Shibley if aware of the project. | Bob Shibley stated that he is familiar with the project; his firm works with Bergman Associates, engineers on the Scajaquada project, and the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy. |
| | Kelly Hayes McAlonie, President of AIA Buffalo commended the RCC for it's work to date and in particular the organizational transparency. She asked for more information on the Architecture and Visitor Center. | The Architecture and Visitor Center is early in the development stage, the intent is to highlight assets of WNY and the region for visitors, with a focus on architecture, and create an experience whereby visitors leave impressed with WNY. It is an aspirational project that will develop a clearer definition as planning proceeds. |
| | Celeste Lawson of the Arts Council commended the RCC and the team. She stated that the arts and cultural community is interested in making a contribution to this project that will add to Buffalo's national reputation. She stated that Richardson and Olmsted were visionaries in their respective fields and planning for the site should acknowledge this by not only preserving the architecture and landscape to its former self, but be visionary in its attitude toward future use. | The RCC will keep this in mind. |

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| | <p>Tim Tielman of the Campaign for Buffalo commended the RCC on its openness. He stated that an Olmsted park is the best economic development engine in the country, with reference to property values around Central Park. He suggested that the master plan should benchmark current property values from Grant to Potomac and north to Amherst St. in order to watch the values grow as the property improves. Economic return should be considered broadly with impacts beyond the boundary of the property.</p> | <p>The RCC will keep this in mind.</p> |
| | <p>Natasha Pasternak asked what is happening with the removal of items from the building, in particular the windows. She also asked about the RCC plans for the time capsule on the site.</p> | <p>Monica Pellegrino Faix advised that no windows or elements are being removed, windows are covered and sealed, and asked Natasha to provide more information later about the time capsule.</p> |
| | <p>Ray Chapman asked if the process was collaborative between the RCC and OMH, in particular because the effort started with an examination of the surplus area and has extended to the entire site.</p> | <p>Howard Zemsky said that the RCC and OMH are working together, at times there might be activities that make OMH uncomfortable, but we are neighbors trying to work together. David Gamble said that the Master Plan will look at all the elements and how they fit together. Sue Joffe, BPC Associate Public Information Specialist, said that the Buffalo Psychiatric Center is eager to have neighbors to partner with and wants to help advance the mission of the RCC.</p> |
| | <p>Paul McDonnell, President of the Campaign for Buffalo, asked if some of the buildings can be reopened for tours, even if on a limited basis.</p> | <p>It is a goal to provide public access as soon as possible. Currently multiple state agencies are involved, OMH still owns the property and there are liability questions, prohibiting immediate access.</p> |
| | <p>Alan Oberst said that there are no academic programs for historic preservation in Buffalo – the Richardson Complex is a great opportunity to study preservation. He suggested that a historic preservation program be created and the site be used as a lab for such teaching.</p> | <p>The RCC will keep this in mind.</p> |
| | <p>Vincent Kuntz of the SUNY Alfred Technology and Craft program may have a role to play in an historic preservation program. Will the RCC be sourcing NYS materials on site?</p> | <p>Yes</p> |

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| | Nancy Churchill stated that there should be interpretation and documentation of the full history of patient treatment, providing accurate information about how people lived, were treated and died on the site. | The RCC will keep this in mind. |
| | Daniel Sach questioned the economic development agenda. The site is a cultural resource and not subject to conventional rules of economic development. It should be supported with tax dollars. He said that other cultural facilities are not self sustaining, why should this one have to play by different rules? | The RCC has not determined the level of public support, if any, that will be needed, and it is an issue that must be considered. The master plan will help identify the degree of economic sustainability. The board's philosophy is to first rationalize the site and stabilize the structures. If the concern is that the RCC will sell land or build structures to support development, be assured that economics will not drive all the decisions. |
| | The ULI slides in the presentation were challenged regarding parcel and land use proposals. | ULI was only here for a week and their ideas helped to start the planning process. The real discipline starts now with the master plan. No decisions have been made. |
| | Make sure the process for neighborhood engagement fully includes the block clubs and adjacent neighbors and interested parties, all of whom should be included in the planning process, not after work is underway. | The public will be involved through an Advisory Group and the RCC sees the public process as essential to good final product. |
| | What is the timeline of this work? | Master Plan will take about 12 months. |